THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE [DR. (SHRIMATI) RITA VERMA]: (a) and (b) There is no ban on sale of common salt except the restriction on sale for direct human consumption. As per amendment made in PFA Rules w.e.f. 27.5.1998, only iodised salt can be sold for direct human consumption. A draft notification has been issued on 10.5.2000, inviting public comments to withdraw this restriction.

The decision to issue this notification was taken in the wake of substained representations received from various sections of public, to the effect that matters of public health should be left to the 'informed' choice and not enforced through compulsion.

Customs Duty on Vaccines

702. SHRI AMAR SINGH: Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that there is heavy customs duty on several vaccines like vaccine against Varicella, Zoster virus, Hepatitis-A virus, Hoemophilus influenzae type B virus, which are not manufactured locally, to the extent of 44 per cent; and

(b) whether Government propose to lower down the customs duty on such vaccines which are highly cost intensive and if not, the reasons thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE [DR. (SHRIMATI) RITA VERMA]: (a) The general rate of basic customs duty on several vaccines, including vaccines against varicella-Zoster virus, Hepatitis-A virus, Hoemophilus influenzae type B virus is 35%. In addition, these vaccines attract a surcharge of 10% of basic customs duty and special additional duty of customs of 4%.

(b) The matter relating to rate of customs duty on such vaccines is presently under examination by the Government.